

Alleged irregularities hit rural infrastructure programme

UNB, Kurigram

Rural infrastructure uplift schemes and other programmes taken up for helping the distressed people of Kurigram district have failed to achieve its objective due to irregularities and corruption.

Irregularities have been rampant during the last three months over wheat and rice allocated for rural infrastructure maintenance (TR) and rural infrastructure renovation (Kabikha) programmes.

The labour force have been paid in cash, much less than the prevalent wage, instead of rice and wheat under Food for Work projects.

Rice and wheat allocated for the purpose have been sold to the traders and farihs in advance. This has changed the original motive behind the Food for Work programmes.

Only a few chosen villages are engaged in the projects putting the majority of the labour force out of work.

The concerned officials remained indifferent to this open misappropriation of money and violation of Kabikha rules.

District Relief and Rehabilitation office said some 955 metric tons of food

grains were allocated for 581 projects in TR sector while 1,999 mts were allocated for 172 projects under Kabikha programme so far. Half of these were in rice.

Works on TR projects started in Nov, 2000 and ended on Jan 31 this year while Kabikha project began in Nov last year and will be completed on Feb 28 this year.

Sources said 80 per cent work on TR projects has been ended and 60 per cent on Kabikha programme have been completed so far.

People involved in the projects sold all the wheat between Tk 7,750 and Tk 8,000 per ton to the traders before the start of the work. With this money, they later employed male workers at Tk 30 and female workers at Tk 25 per day on contract basis for excavation work.

A project chairman on condition of anonymity said that they had no alternative to selling the food grains in the market because the local officials had to be bribed and other unexpected expenses had to be incurred.

But officials said no irregularity has been committed and there was no evidence of corrupt practices.

Abductions up in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The number of abduction cases has been increasing in the district alarmingly.

The minority community people are the worst sufferers here. But the law enforcing agencies are not in a position to take steps against the criminals as most of the cases are not recorded with government's concerned agencies, local people and police said.

On January 21 a group of armed miscreants abducted a youngman Khokan from his village Khalfalia under Saikupa upazila at gun point. His elder brother was also caught by the terrorist group when he went to request them to release his brother. The abductors released after receiving Taka 50 thousand from the family on January 25.

Two days later the terrorist group abducted another youngman from village Rajadapur in same upazila. His

guardians paid Taka one lakh as ransom.

On December 31 a gang of terrorists abducted Anjan Kumar Mandal from village Sarupnagar in some upazila demanding taka two lakh. On payment of Taka one lakh Anjan was rescued from the armed terrorists after seven days of the abduction.

Earlier Malin Sadhu of village Tribeni in same upazila was abducted. The abductors demanded Taka ten lakh and he was rescued after paying a good amount of money.

Sankar Dutta, an ex-union parishad member was abducted from his village home at Khalkula under Saikupa Municipality in November. He was rescued after paying Taka 70 thousand after three days.

When asked why all the matters related to abduction are not recorded with law enforcing agencies. Concerned sources said, they can not file case or inform the matter to police as per threat of the abductors.

5 held hostage for Tk 25 lakh as ransom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Pirates have held five people hostage demanding Tk 25 lakh as ransom.

The hostages include four-year-old boy Asadur Rahman, son of Mujibar Rahman of Chakbara village under Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira district. Four others are Al Mamoon, 14, son of Mansur Biswas of village Chakbari; Rupchand Sarder, 25, son of Ketabdi Sarder; Shahidul, 22, son of Islam Sarder and SSC examinee Shahanoor, 16, son of Lutfar Morol of Napitkhali village under same upazilas.

The incident occurred on the night of February 4, police said. The pirates have threatened to kill the hostages if the ransom is not paid by Friday at Kalirchar along the Sundarbans.

Jubo League leader stabbed in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna city Jubo League leader was stabbed on Monday morning by some Sramik League activists.

The incident took place at the Skid Ghat where Rezaul Huq Ripon, 30, went to see the latest situation following police operation against drug traffickers.

Ripon helped police detecting drug traffickers and their hideouts. He was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) in a critical condition, doctors said.

A case was filed with police accusing ten activists of Sramik League in this connection.

Two factions of ruling Awami League Sramik League Whip group and Talukder group are at loggerheads for establishing supremacy at Skid Ghat.

Death of judges hampers quick disposal of cases

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Acute shortage of judges in Netrakona courts is delaying the disposal of cases. As a result, huge numbers of cases, both civil and criminal, have been lying pending for years.

Court sources said at present only three out of eight assistant judges are working. Similarly only one sub-judge in addition to his duty has been performing the duty of another sub-judge.

According to the sources, the assistant judge of Purbadhala upazila court in addition to his duty has been performing the duties in the courts at Mohanganj, Madan, Khalajuri and Kendua upazilas.

The assistant judge of Atpara upazila court has been performing the additional duties in Kendua upazila court.

The sub-judge of Netrakona second court has been performing

the additional duty of the first court for the last three months. Judge of the first court has been transferred to Sherpur district. But no judge has been posted.

In the district court, more than 500 cases have been lying pending for a long time in the court of senior assistant judge. Only one senior assistant judge has been burdened with many cases. It is difficult on the part of a single judge to dispose of many cases.

Only one additional district judge has been conducting the trial of both civil and criminal, besides appeal cases of both the categories. At present, about 400 civil cases have been lying pending in the court of additional district and sessions judge.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to appoint judges to solve the problem.

Two bridges remain under-construction for six years

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Two under-construction bridges over the River Mahananda could not be completed in last six years due to lack of necessary funds.

Construction work on Makrampur and Chowdala bridges on Rahanpur-Bholahat and Gomastapur-Chowdala roads began in 1995.

The authorities first planned to construct two bailey bridges over the river at Makrampur and Chowdala at a cost of over Tk 8 crore, but later the authorities changed their plan and decided to construct full-fledged bridges.

As part of its plan, construction work on Makrampur bridge started in 1995 at a cost of Tk 12.75 crore while on Chowdala bridge began in the same year at a cost of Tk 3.63 crore which was sanctioned earlier.

Meanwhile, 70 per cent work on

Makrampur and 60 per cent work on Chowdala bridges had been completed, but the remaining work did not progress due to lack of necessary fund allotment.

Local people urged the authorities concerned to sanction necessary funds for completion of the bridges for the sake of smooth movement of traffic.

Another report from Pirojpur says: Construction works on two bridges in Mathbaria upazila are likely to be completed by June this year.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is constructing the bridges at a cost of over Tk 1.11 crore.

Officials said a 87.39-meter long bailey bridge is being constructed over river Nala near Babu Bazar at a cost of over Tk 91.23 lakh and a 31.18-meter long steel-deck bridge over Sonakhali Canal costing over Tk 19.95 lakh.

NEWS SNAPS

Clash over land: Man killed

UNB, Kishoreganj

A man was killed and four others were injured, two of them critically, in an attack by rivals over land dispute at Jikarjora village in Sadar upazila under Kishoreganj district on Saturday. The dead was identified as Altu Mia, 35, son of Abdur Rashid of the village. He succumbed at the Sadar hospital. The injured were identified as the deceased's brothers Dulal, 28, and Karim, 20, his family members Asia Khatun and Jyosna Begum.

Police and locals said about 20-25 people equipped with lethal weapons allegedly led by Abu Sayed, Razzak, A Sattar and Kitab Ali of the same village, attacked the house of Abdur Rashid at about 6.30 am and beat the family members mercilessly. Later, the attackers ransacked the house and looted valuables and cash. Of the injured, Dulal and Karim were admitted to the Sadar hospital in a critical condition. Police visited the spot. A case was filed.

Nonagenarian murdered

UNB, Tangail

A nonagenarian man was killed by unidentified assailants at Purba Adalatpara of Tangail town Sunday night. Police said local people found Alhaj Hurmuz Ali Talukder, 90, lying unconscious beside a pond at about 8pm. Later, he succumbed to his injuries on way to Dhaka from local General Hospital.

A hammer was recovered from the spot and the body of Hurmuz Ali had some injury marks. Police suspect that assailants might have hit him with the hammer that caused his death. Later, police arrested a man in connection with the killing.

Three housewives 'commit suicide'

UNB, Manikganj

Three housewives allegedly committed suicide in Sadar and Singair upazila of Manikganj district on Monday. The victims are Taslima, 20, of Manikpur village and Anna Begum, 40, of Kagzinaagar village in Sadar upazila and Ambia, 35, of RATHERIA village in Singair upazila. Police and hospital sources said Taslima, wife of Tulu Mia and Anna, wife Darug Ali took poison while Ambia, wife of Hossain Ali, hanged herself following family feud.

Meanwhile, police recovered the body of another housewife from South Jamsha village of Singair upazila Monday. The victim, wife of Pannu Mia, died for unknown reason, police said. All the bodies were sent to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Separate UD cases were filed with respective thanas.

Extensive IRRI-Boro farming scheme taken up in 16 N dists

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

An extensive IRRI-Boro cultivation programme has been taken up in 16 northern districts in the current IRRI-Boro season with a production target of 37.21 lakh metric tons of paddy.

According to local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) officials, the target has been fixed to bring 12,50,250 hectares of lands under the programme.

AED officials said quality seeds are being distributed among the farmers make the programme a success. Among others, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank is also disbursing loans for Boro paddy cultivation.

AED sources said many farmers have already begun transplanting Boro paddy saplings.

AED sources said a total of 1,59,200 metric tons of paddy will be produced on 53,300 hectares of lands in Rajshahi; 4,67,400 metric tons on 1,56,500 hectares of lands in Naogaon; 1,79,240 metric tons on 60,400 hectares of lands in Natore; 1,23,320 metric tons of paddy on 41,200 hectares of lands in Chapainawabganj; 5,46,540 metric tons on 1,83,500 hectares of lands in Bogra; 1,90,000 metric tons on 64,00 hectares of lands in Joypurhat; 1,60,000 metric tons on 54,500 hectares of lands in Pabna; 3,21,400 metric tons on 1,09,000 hectares of land in Sirajganj; 2,76,480 metric tons on 92,300 hectares of lands in Rangpur; 2,68,600 metric tons on 90,000 hectares of lands in Gaibandha; 2,02,000 metric tons on 68,600 hectares of lands in Kurigram; 1,14,380 metric tons on 38,200 hectares of lands in Lalmonirhat;

3,75,000 metric tons on 1,25,000 hectares of lands in Dinajpur; 1,08,370 metric tons of paddy on 37,500 hectares of lands in Thakurgaon; 48,080 metric tons on 16,050 hectares of lands in Panchgarh.

Ten hurt as BCL, BNP clash in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

At least ten people were injured when students of ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and opposition BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) clashed on the campus of Godagari Degree College in Rajshahi on Monday.

Three seriously injured students were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

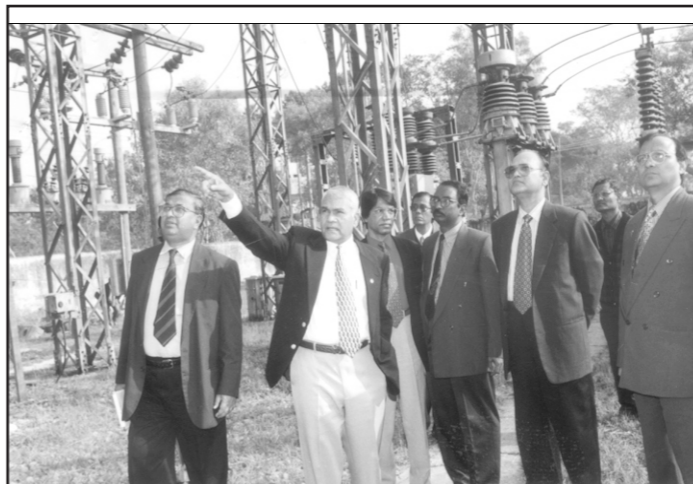


PHOTO: STAR

Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Brigadier General M A Maleque last week visited the Jalalabad Cantonment Sub-station in Sylhet.